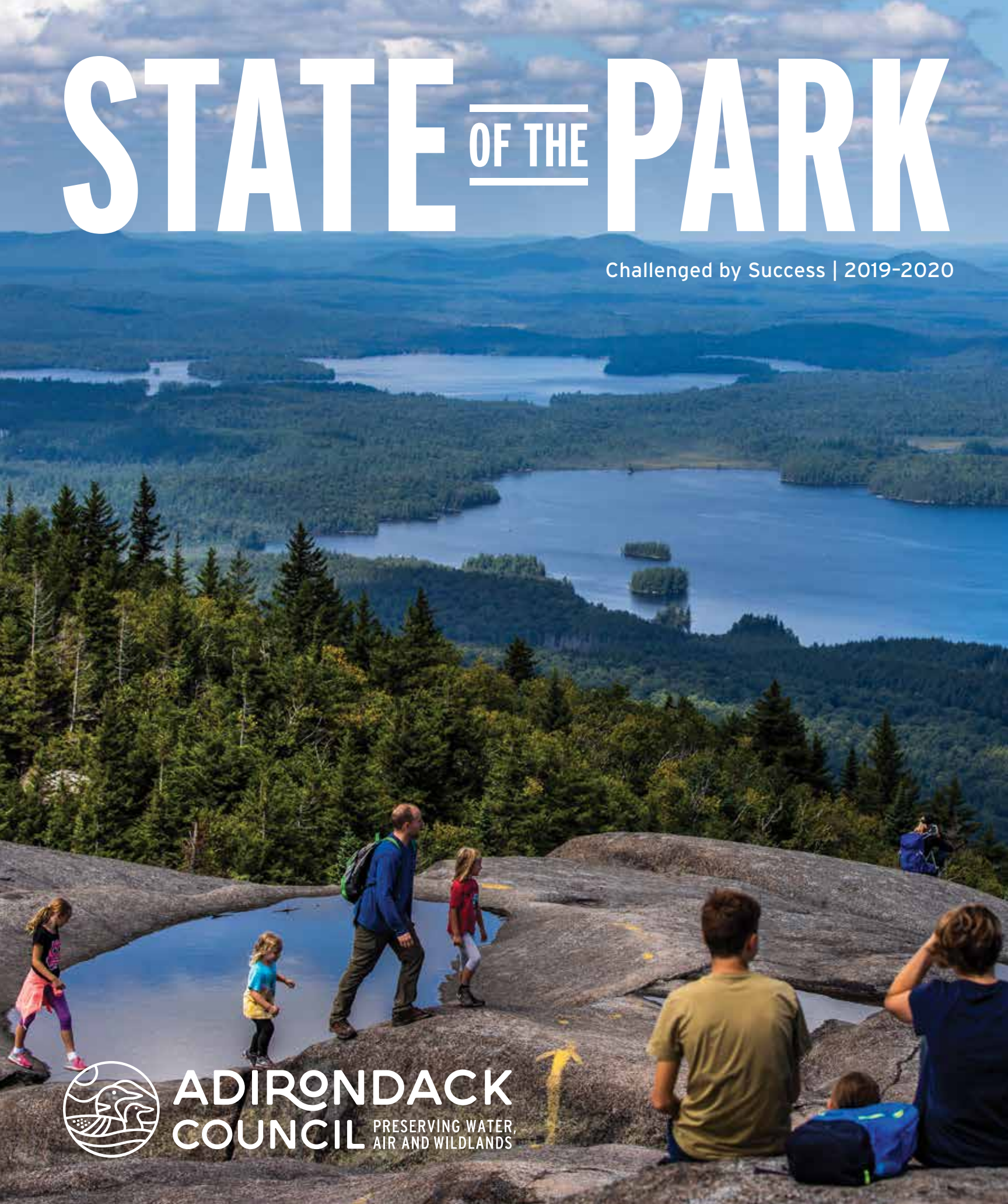


# STATE OF THE PARK

Challenged by Success | 2019-2020



**ADIRONDACK  
COUNCIL** PRESERVING WATER,  
AIR AND WILDLANDS

# Reflecting on 2019 and Looking Ahead

Dear Friends of the Adirondacks,

Thank you for participating in the preservation of the globally unique but threatened Adirondack Park. Together, we are building a better world where people and nature, wilderness and wildlife will thrive together, forever.

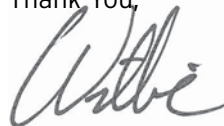
The success the Adirondacks enjoy is now one of our biggest challenges. The Park looks like a success. The maps show lands as protected. Government says it supports protecting clean water, air and wildlands. Everyone says they support the Park.

The science shows otherwise. The Adirondack Park is so popular that overuse is harming wilderness and communities. Air pollution is increasing, excess road salt and untreated sewage are harming drinking water, climate change is real, and sales of ATVs and UTVs are soaring. Development and roads are being built on lands mapped as protected. Hundreds of millions of

state dollars are announced for needed community development, yet there is no new funding for the traditional work Forest Rangers used to do, including education and wilderness management. Ninety percent of people with boats don't stop at the new invasive species decontamination station on the Northway because the free wash isn't mandatory.

These challenges are also opportunities. The science that tells us to be worried also tells us what the solutions are and guides the achievable 2020 priorities listed in the back of this report. Together we can sustain the success of the Adirondacks for ourselves and for future generations.

Thank You,



William C. Janeway  
Executive Director



PHOTO: NANCIE BATTAGLIA

**William C. Janeway**  
Executive Director

 @WillieJaneway

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# CONTENTS

- 2 Letter from the Executive Director
- 5 2019 Report Card
- 6 The Governor
- 8 State Legislature
- 11 The Courts
- 12 Attorney General
- 13 Tip of the Hat
- 14 Preserving Water & Wildlands**
- 16 Local Government
- 18 Dept. of Environmental Conservation
- 21 Adirondack Park Agency
- 23 Federal Government
- 25 Other Agencies
- 26 Awards
- 27 2020 Priorities

Outdoor recreation is central to the economy that is so important to the Adirondacks' 103 communities. Increasingly, there is agreement that comprehensive planning, better funding and a pilot program for permits are tools that could help tackle the problems associated with overuse of the Adirondack Park's most popular hiking trails. These actions will benefit the natural resources, visitor safety, wilderness experience, and local economy.



## Our Mission

The mission of the Adirondack Council is to ensure the ecological integrity and wild character of the Adirondack Park for current and future generations.

*Written and Edited by Adirondack Council Staff*  
*View online at: [AdirondackCouncil.org](http://AdirondackCouncil.org)*  
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*Cover: View from Ampersand Mountain* PHOTO: NANCIE BATTAGLIA



# ABOUT THE PARK

**The Adirondack Park** is the world's largest intact temperate deciduous forest. It is also the largest park in the contiguous United States. It contains six million acres (9,300 square miles), covers one-fifth of New York State and is equal in size to neighboring Vermont. The Adirondack Park is nearly three times the size of Yellowstone National Park.

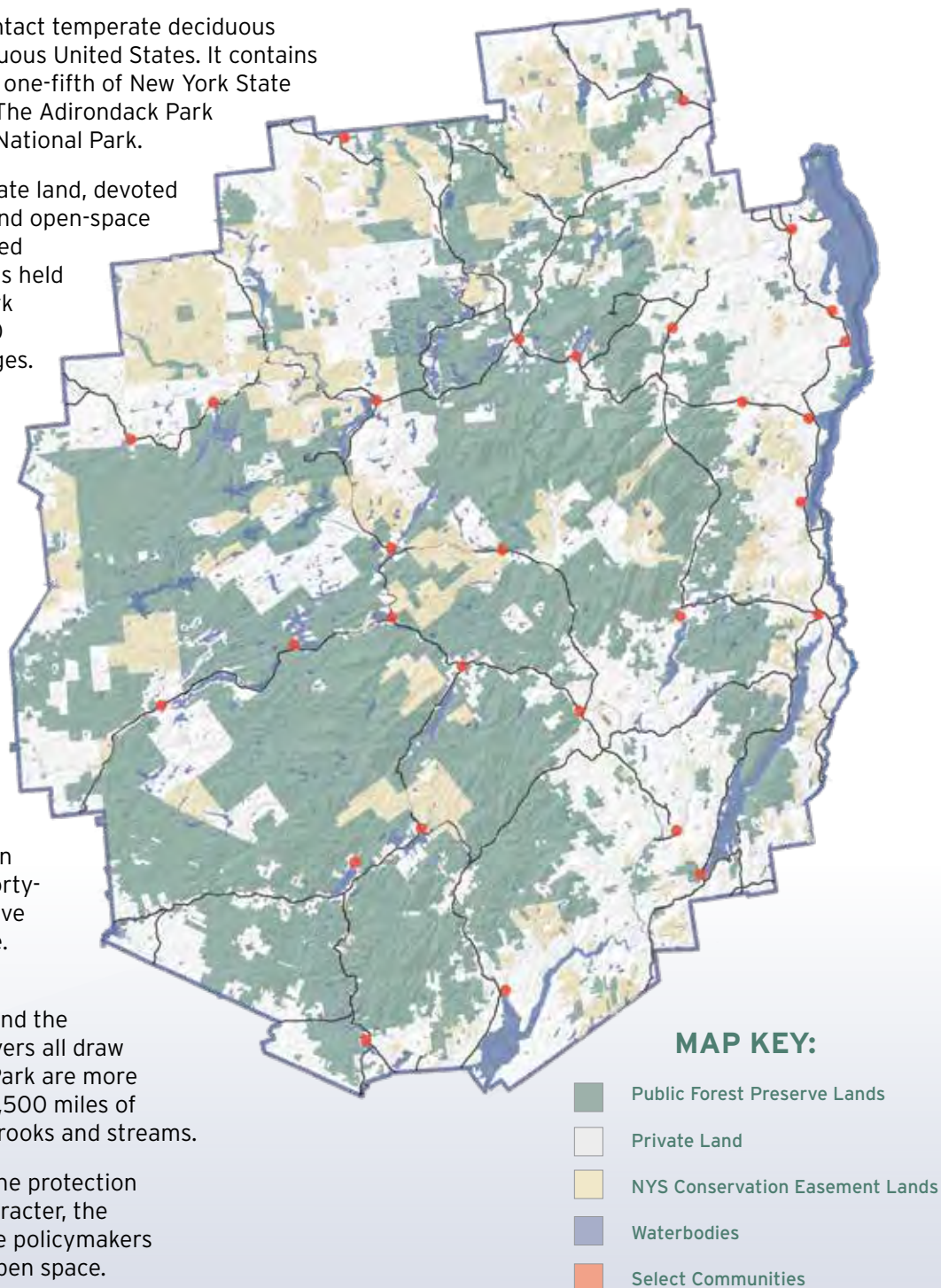
More than half of the Adirondack Park is private land, devoted principally to hamlets, forestry, agriculture, and open-space recreation. Nearly 775,000 acres are protected from development by conservation easements held by the state or private organizations. The Park is home for 130,000 permanent and 200,000 seasonal residents in 120 hamlets and 9 villages. The Park hosts 12.4 million visitors yearly.

Nearly half of the Park is publicly owned Forest Preserve, protected as "Forever Wild" by the NYS Constitution since 1894. About 1.1 million acres of these public lands are protected as Wilderness, where non-mechanized recreation may be enjoyed. Most of the public land (more than 1.4 million acres) is Wild Forest, where motorized uses are permitted on designated waters, roads and trails.

Plants and wildlife abound in the Park. Old growth forests cover more than 100,000 acres of public land. The western and southern Adirondacks are gentle landscapes of hills, lakes, wetlands, ponds, and streams. In the northeast are the forty-six High Peaks. Forty-three of them rise above 4,000 feet and 11 have alpine summits that rise above the timberline.

The Adirondacks include the headwaters of five major drainage basins. Lake Champlain and the Hudson, Black, St. Lawrence, and Mohawk Rivers all draw water from the Adirondack Park. Within the Park are more than 2,800 lakes and ponds, and more than 1,500 miles of rivers, fed by an estimated 30,000 miles of brooks and streams.

Through public education and advocacy for the protection of the Park's ecological integrity and wild character, the Adirondack Council advises public and private policymakers on ways to safeguard this great expanse of open space.



# 2019 REPORT CARD

PHOTO © CARL HEILMAN II/WILD VISIONS INC.

Elected and appointed government leaders made decisions late in 2018 and in 2019 that affected the legacy of the Adirondacks. Here is a report on the 2019 State of the Park priorities (issued Sept. 2018).

## Adirondack Park Overuse

State officials began to address overuse, but have far to go. They expanded public education, but didn't address Wilderness preservation. The state limited roadside parking in some locations, but didn't develop a comprehensive plan or fund a reservation system, better infrastructure, staffing and peak-use management. The entire Forest Preserve needs a general ban on ATVs.

## Clean Water, Clean Air and Clean Energy

The Governor and Legislature passed historic Climate Change legislation and expanded funding (to over \$3 billion) for community Clean Water grant programs. More people recognized that aggressive action is needed to address road salt contamination of drinking water. The federal government went backwards on clean water, clean air, climate, and renewable energy.

## Forever Wild

New York moved to weaken the State Constitution's "Forever Wild" clause (Article XIV, Section 1) and pressed ahead with plans to build a public, motorized recreational trail on Forest Preserve that is supposed to be protected from motors under the Wild, Scenic and Recreational Rivers Act.

## Adirondack Park Agency

The Governor didn't fill three vacant seats on the Park Agency Board, didn't nominate a full or diverse slate and didn't re-nominate any current members serving on expired terms. A bill to apply modern conservation science to decrease impacts of subdivisions and development in remote locations advanced but didn't pass. The Agency's Board chair quit.

## Forests and Farms

The state didn't significantly improve incentives, regulations or funding to promote healthy, ecologically sustainable, climate-smart private forests and/or farms in the Adirondacks. Congress passed a Farm Bill with needed funds for local food promotion/marketing, cleaner energy and farmland conservation.

## Invasive Species

The Legislature renewed for one year a law partially addressing transport of invasive species from one lake or river to another. Legislative leaders and others committed to seek a permanent law next year that includes stronger protections and mandatory decontamination.

## Conservation Funding

Despite requests, there was no increase in the state budget for clean air, wildlife, wildlands, Forest Rangers, foresters, enforcement, and other priority environmental staffing. Capital funding for open space protection went down. Funding for state land stewardship remained inadequate given the negative impacts of overuse. Clean water funding increased (see left).

## Community Projects

The state provided almost \$400 million in aid for Adirondack communities including \$180 million to the Olympic Regional Development Authority; \$84.8 million for 70 economic development projects region-wide; \$16.2 million for a Visitors Center on the Northway; and a \$10 million revitalization grant to the Village of Saranac Lake. The state provided most of the \$25 million for the Frontier Town Campground, Equestrian and Day Use Area and more than \$75 million in Forest Preserve property tax payments. Broadband access and cell service still need attention, while \$250,000 was secured for the Adirondack Diversity Initiative. ■



# THE GOVERNOR

PHOTO © CARL HEILMAN II/WILD VISIONS INC.

## Climate Leadership

Gov. Andrew Cuomo negotiated with the Legislature to pass a new climate law that calls for the state to virtually eliminate its greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, when all of the state's electricity would come from carbon-free sources.



CUOMO

The Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act would require the state to slash all of its climate-warming pollution by 85 percent below 1990 levels by 2050, and offset the remaining 15 percent. This will create America's first net-zero economy and make New York a leader in efforts to curb greenhouse gases. Climate change threatens natural and human communities in the Adirondacks.

## Green Future Means Clean Water

In 2018, the Governor proposed a \$10-billion, five-year Green Future Fund for clean water, clean energy, parks, and the environment. While details remain scarce, one component was approved. It increased infrastructure funding to protect streams, lakes and drinking water from untreated sewage and other pollutants. The state budget increased funding for clean water infrastructure by \$500 million to a five-year total of \$3 billion, including \$1 billion this year.

## Half-Slate Earns Senate Rebuke

At the end of the legislative session, the Governor proposed only four nominees to the Senate to fill the six (now seven)

empty seats and expired terms on the Adirondack Park Agency (APA) board. The Governor's nominees would have been acceptable if they had been accompanied by others with experience in conservation law, environmental science and planning. Sen. Environmental Conservation Committee Chair Todd Kaminsky, D-Long Beach, understands the need for the APA to be strong and independent of those it regulates, and rejected the partial slate.

## Leadership Languishing at Park Agency

The Governor ignored the need to nominate a full-time chair of the Adirondack Park Agency following the resignation of Sherman Craig of Wanakena. Karen Feldman voluntarily served as acting chair until quitting, citing a lack of compensation and a lack of respect. The nearly full-time job of chair comes with a \$30,000 salary (unchanged since 1971). Other board members receive no salary. All but one of the APA board's eight citizen members is now serving on an expired term.

## Making All People Welcome

The Governor supported designating \$250,000 of the Environmental Protection Fund for the Adirondack Diversity Initiative. The Initiative has been an all-volunteer effort to make the Adirondack Park a more welcoming place to all New York residents and visitors from around the world. With state funding, the Adirondack North Country Association can hire a diversity program director and better assist communities in removing unconscious biases that can discourage visitors and residents.

## Recognizes Threat of Overuse

The Governor's State of the State Address in January recognized that his recent push to boost Adirondack tourism has worked, and that overuse is a concern: "Current levels of unprecedented high use in popular areas have resulted in challenges to public health and safety as well as impacts to the natural resources and the visitor experience." Continued economic success requires careful nurturing of the Forest Preserve's health and beauty.



A large group of hikers on the trail to Cascade

PHOTO: NANCIE BATTAGLIA

## Funds for Staff

The Governor didn't give the hard-working staff of the Adirondack Park Agency or the Dept. of Environmental Conservation the leadership, tools or resources they needed to hire more staff and curb overuse of popular Forest Preserve trails and summits, to halt the spread of invasive species, or to reduce the impacts of using too much road salt. The freeze on total agency staff was maintained except for five employees for the new Frontier Town Campground.

## Substantial Cash for Communities, Tourism

The Governor has devoted an additional \$180 million to fund new Olympic Regional Development Authority facilities in Lake Placid, which will host the World University Games in 2023. This is on top of \$80+ million announced last year. The winter games expect to attract 2,500 college athletes from 52 countries. The Governor's Regional Economic Development Council for the North Country provided \$64.8 million for 70 economic development projects across the Adirondack/North Country region.

## Stewardship Funding Higher, Not High Enough

The Governor proposed a small increase in the State Land Stewardship portion of the 2019-20 Environmental Protection Fund, seeking \$33.7 million. The final \$33 million approved by the Legislature was higher than the 2018-19 level of \$32.6 million; however, too much has been spent to accommodate motorized recreation. There were no funds dedicated to address overuse in the Park's busiest and most popular Wilderness areas.



Aerial view of Saranac Lake

PHOTO © CARL HEILMAN II/WILD VISIONS INC.

## Facelift for Park's Biggest Village

The Governor awarded a \$10-million downtown revitalization grant to the Village of Saranac Lake, the Park's largest village. Performing arts are an important element of a vibrant and successful community. They received a big boost winning the largest grant of \$2.5 million for the \$6.5 million Pendragon Theatre downtown expansion.

## Good People in Right Places

The Governor made great choices for his top environmental advisors when he appointed Dale Bryk of the Natural Resources Defense Council as Deputy Secretary for Energy and the Environment and Amanda Lefton of The Nature Conservancy as First Assistant Secretary for Energy and the Environment. He also chose Open Space Institute Senior VP Erik Kulleseid to direct the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, and retained veteran Dept. of Environmental Conservation Commissioner Basil Seggos after first accepting his resignation in 2018.

## Proposed Raid on Environmental Fund

As part of his budget plans, the Governor proposed using the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) to pay for salaries of state employees. The EPF is a capital projects account designed to fund open space protection, landfill closures, recycling facilities, watershed protection projects, and grants for projects that state agencies cannot complete on their own. The Legislature would not agree to the EPF raid.

## Making Invasive Species Unwelcome

In June, the Governor awarded \$2.8 million in grants to Paul Smith's College Adirondack Watershed Institute and multiple Adirondack lake associations to help combat invasive species. The state, with support from partners including The Nature Conservancy, Lake George Association, Fund for Lake George and Lake George Commission, also opened and staffed a new boat decontamination station at the Northway (I-87) Adirondack Visitor Center, in the rest area between Exits 17 & 18. Unfortunately, voluntary use of the new Northway facility is less than 10 percent.

## Mission Not Accomplished on Broadband

In spite of committing \$500 million in subsidies to encourage private infrastructure for broadband internet coverage, reliable service has not reached New York's most

remote locations. Both the Adirondack Council and local officials called for better coverage. See **Attorney General** section for details on A.G. Letitia James' lawsuit that won customer rebates for services not rendered. The Governor announced in January 2019 a new task force, but to date there have been no appointments or meetings scheduled.

## Helping Visitors Understand What They See

The Visitor Interpretive Centers operated by Paul Smith's College in the hamlet of Paul Smiths and by the SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry in Newcomb received \$180,000 and \$120,000 in state grants respectively from the Environmental Protection Fund.

## State Sacks Single-Use Plastic Bags

The Governor and Legislature agreed in the state budget to ban single-use plastic bags for most retail carry-out goods starting in March of 2020. The ban will reduce litter in the Adirondacks and state-wide, protect vulnerable wildlife, and reduce petroleum use. Exceptions allow disposable plastic bags for raw meat, fish or poultry, bulk items, sliced/prepared foods, newspaper delivery, or prescription drugs. Trash bags, food-storage bags and garment bags will still be available. Cities and counties will have the option of charging a 5-cent fee for paper bags.

## Taking a Bite Out of Food Waste

The Governor gained approval of the Food Donation and Food Scrap Recycling Act, in an effort to prevent food waste, reduce greenhouse gas, and rescue wasted food for those in need. Surveys indicate that 40 percent of food in the U.S. is wasted, while some 2.5 million New Yorkers struggle to have enough to eat. The largest generators of food waste will be required to separate excess wholesome food for donation and to recycle/compost any scraps. This effort is expected to reduce waste in the Adirondacks and keep 250,000 tons of food out of landfills each year. ■



# STATE LEGISLATURE

PHOTO © CARL HEILMAN II/WILD VISIONS INC.

## BOTH HOUSES

### **New Leadership Brings New Climate Action**

In June, Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins, D-Yonkers, Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie, D-Bronx, Senate Environmental Conservation Committee (EnCon) Chairman Todd Kaminsky, D-Long Beach, and Assembly EnCon Chair Steven Englebright, D-Setauket, led their colleagues to approve the nation's most aggressive legislation to curb climate change. The Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act calls for the state to eliminate its greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, when all of the state's electricity would come from carbon-free sources. Sen. Betty Little, R-Queensbury, and Assemblyman Dan Stec, R-Queensbury, whose districts cover a large section of the Park, voted against the act. Assemblyman Billy Jones, D-Chateaugay, voted yes. The Adirondack Council was present when Gov. Andrew Cuomo signed it into law.



STEWART-COUSINS



HEASTIE

### **Constitutional Right to Clean Water, Air**

Sen. David Carlucci, D-New City, and Assemblyman Englebright won first passage in both their houses of a resolution for a Constitutional Amendment that would create an Environmental Bill of Rights. The bill would ensure New York residents the right to clean water, clean air and a healthy

environment. The amendment will need to be approved once again in 2021, under a new legislature, before it can go to the voters.

### **Land Bank a Win for Communities**

Senator José Serrano, D-Manhattan, and Assemblyman Englebright sponsored a bill (S.6398/A.8136) that authorizes towns and counties to utilize a 250-acre land bank for public health and safety projects on the "Forever Wild" Forest Preserve when there are no other viable alternatives. The "Adirondack and Catskill Health and Safety Land Account" was created by a Constitutional Amendment that was approved by New York State voters in 2017. The land bank will allow Adirondack local governments to remove hazardous curves on roadways, install public utilities in road right-of-ways, and carry out public water supply projects when they are necessary to meet drinking water standards. Larger projects will still require legislative approval. The Governor is expected to sign it.

### **Anti-Bias Effort Gains Funding**

During budget negotiations, Sen. José Serrano, D-Manhattan, successfully urged his colleagues to secure \$250,000 within the Environmental Protection Fund for the Adirondack Diversity Initiative. ADI had been an all-volunteer effort aimed at making the Park more welcoming to all. Many members of the Senate and Assembly went on record in support. The Adirondack Council worked with partners to organize, promote and participate



SERRANO

in ADI events and seminars. The ADI collaboration will now be headquartered at the Adirondack North Country Association, an economic development organization. *Note: The Council doesn't accept any government funding.*



A lake steward washes a boat near South Bay

### **Take a Year, Get it Right**

Assemblyman Englebright and Senator Kaminsky sponsored legislation (A.7692/S.5937) to extend by a year the state's law calling on people to take "reasonable precautions" to avoid the transport of invasive species from one lake or river to another. Both sponsors made commitments to strengthen the law next year and support a boater-friendly mandatory decontamination program to protect the Adirondack Park.

### **Chair Makes Every Accommodation**

Assembly EnCon Chair Englebright convened diverse stakeholders and repeatedly modified his Adirondack Conservation Design bill (A.8123) in an effort to use new science to update 1970's era Adirondack Park Agency protections against development that would harm wildlife, water quality and open space in the



Adirondack Park's most remote locations. By amending his bill to meet their concerns, the chair earned support from environmental organizations, the Adirondack Association of Towns and Villages and the Adirondack Common Ground Alliance. Senate EnCon Chair Kaminsky was also a sponsor.

### Opportunity Squandered

Both houses allowed a Conservation Design bill (S.6484/A.8123) to die in committee that would have improved the Adirondack Park Agency's (APA) 48-year-old standards for development in the Park's most sensitive locations. The bill would protect wildlife, water quality and forest health by clustering remote development, leaving the majority of the parcel intact. The APA's rules discourage residential development in unbroken forest, but requiring clustering and similar conservation strategies are at the discretion of the agency. This legislation was not advanced in spite of support from Adirondack environmental organizations, the Adirondack Association of Towns and Villages, the Adirondack Park Local Government Review Board and the Adirondack Common Ground Alliance.

### It's a Start

EnCon Chairs Kaminsky and Englebright sponsored legislation (S.5836/A.7537) to curb all-terrain vehicle (ATV) misuse in the state's four most sensitive forests: the Adirondack and Catskill forest preserves, the Long Island Pine Barrens and Albany Pine Bush. The bills were introduced after the Adirondack Council issued a report in 2019 entitled: **WRONG WAY: How New York State Can Course-Correct on ATVs.**



ENGLEBRIGHT

### Boost for Works Programs

Legislative leaders in both houses supported the Governor's New York Works Program, increasing state budget funding for Dept. of Environmental Conservation capital

projects by \$15.25 million, to \$55.25 million. The funds will be used to improve access to state lands, rehabilitate campgrounds, buy air-quality monitoring infrastructure, remediate contamination, and repair/maintain dams and fish hatcheries. None of the funding is dedicated to address overuse or protect Wilderness.

### Water Money Everywhere, Not a Drop ...

Despite appropriating billions of dollars for clean water loan programs, the Legislature failed to provide supplemental hardship grants beyond 25 percent of total project costs for small, rural communities whose taxpayers cannot afford expensive wastewater treatment systems without state help. Programs funded by the state's Environmental Facilities Corp. cap state grants to communities at 25 percent of the cost of the project. Adirondack communities, which have an average of 1,000 residents each, cannot afford to repay 75 percent of multi-million-dollar projects, even with zero-interest loans. Both houses failed to act on a measure by Senator Anna M. Kaplan, D-Great Neck, and Assemblyman Steven Otis, D-Rye, (S.4520/A.6316) which was supported by the Council, to allow 40-year, zero-interest loans instead of 30-year terms.

### No Boost for Forest Health

Neither house passed new property tax incentives for improved private forest management. There were diverse stakeholders agreeing on the need to make the program more efficient, reduce the current acreage limits, and create incentives for those who manage forests for wildlife protection and/or carbon sequestration, rather than just for timber production.

### Acid Rain Research Support in Doubt

Despite cuts in federal funding proposed by the Trump administration, the Legislature failed to provide new funding to support vital acid rain and climate change data collection in the Adirondack Park. Funding remains in doubt for air and water sampling programs such as those undertaken by the

Adirondack Lakes Survey Corp. Meanwhile, it has been almost 35 years since the last comprehensive survey of Park waters for acid rain damage. A new modified assessment is needed to track progress and to prove that pollution controls enacted so far have worked and should be advanced.

### Motorized Bicycles Pose Challenge

Both houses passed legislation (S.5291A/A.7431B) sponsored by Assemblywoman Nily Rozic, D-Queens, and Sen. Jessica Ramos, D-Queens, that authorizes motor-assisted bikes (e-bikes) of less than 750 watts to be used on streets and roads. Qualifying e-bikes have a maximum speed of 20 mph via electric motors. The bill authorizes local governing bodies to restrict or prohibit e-bikes, and prohibits e-bikes on state Forest Preserve lands, except where the Dept. of Environmental Conservation allows them. It is unclear whether the Governor will sign the bill.

### Reclaiming Multi-Use for the Many

Sen. Anna M. Kaplan, D-Great Neck, and Assemblywoman Patricia Fahy, D-Albany, sponsored legislation (S.4416B/A.5035B) that would require the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation to work with the depts. of Environmental Conservation, Health and Transportation to create a comprehensive plan for the development of non-motorized multi-use trail systems. Lately, state agencies that manage public lands have been using the term "multi-use" trails to accommodate more motorized recreation and use. This legislation would ensure that "multi-use" trails include the needs of hikers, paddlers, snowshoers, and skiers. It was unclear whether the Governor would sign the bill.



KAPLAN



FAHY

## SENATE

### Demanding a Higher Standard

In June, Senate EnCon Chair Todd Kaminsky refused to accept from Gov. Andrew Cuomo an incomplete slate of nominees for the Adirondack Park Agency (APA) Board. Kaminsky demanded that the Governor nominate a full set of new and returning candidates who together represent the diversity of skills, experience and expertise needed for a strong and independent APA. The Governor offered three, then four, candidates to fill six (now seven) slots -- four expired terms and three vacated seats. A board designed to protect a national treasure requires a full roster of qualified candidates.



KAMINSKY



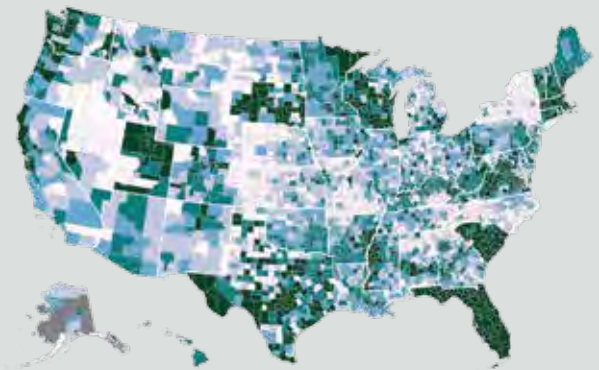
Former DEC Commissioner Thomas Jorling and Sen. José Serrano, D-Manhattan

### ATV Bills Set Dangerous Course

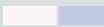
Some members of the Senate sponsored bills that would loosen restrictions on all-terrain vehicles (ATV) without addressing the damage and public safety threats posed by current uses. Sen. Michael H. Ranzenhofer, R-Williamsville, sponsored a bill (S.3311) that would expand the size of ATVs required to be registered for public use in New York from 1,000 pounds to 1,800 pounds. This would increase the number of ATVs and their potential to harm public resources. Sen. James Seward, R-Oneonta, sponsored a bill to ease registration requirements for

## Respect for Political Differences

A March 4, 2019 article in *Atlantic Magazine* contained an interactive map showing that the counties comprising the Adirondack Park and adjacent areas of Upstate New York are among the most politically tolerant in the United States. Surveys showed that local residents respected their neighbors' political beliefs, even those that directly opposed their own, and were the least likely to demonize or stereotype those who disagree.



Overall Political Prejudice

Less Prejudiced  More Prejudiced

Source: [www.theatlantic.com](http://www.theatlantic.com)

owners who claim they won't take them off of private property. This would make trespass harder to prosecute by removing an important identification tool from law enforcement. Neither bill passed the Senate.

### Increasing the Minimum Age

The Senate passed legislation (S.5035) sponsored by Senator Harckham, D-Lewisboro, that would increase the minimum age for operating an all-terrain vehicle (ATV) alone from 10 to 14. Children account for a disproportionate number of serious injuries and deaths due to ATV crashes. The Assembly failed to pass the bill.



HARCKHAM

### Bias in Favor of Upstate is Still Bias

In February, Sen. Joseph Griffo, R-Rome, proposed a resolution for a Constitutional Amendment reverting New York to the practice of electing one Senator per each of the state's 62 counties. Under this plan, Manhattan (pop. 1.65 million) would have the same Senate representation as Hamilton County (pop. 4,485). This practice was deemed unconstitutional by the U.S.

Supreme Court in 1964. The court said the U.S. Constitution's 14th Amendment demands that legislative election districts must be equal in population, to preserve the mandate of "one person, one vote." This resolution was not approved by the Senate.

## ASSEMBLY

### Investigating Road Salt

Assembly members displayed growing interest in the contamination of drinking, surface and groundwater from the over-application of road salt by the state. Assembly Encon Chair Englebright wrote to the Department of Transportation requesting detailed information about road salt application for use in drafting potential future legislation.

### It's a Non-Starter

Assemblyman Clifford Crouch, R-Binghamton, sponsored a bill (A.1401) proposing to open all public lands to all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) by anyone "certified as handicapped." The state already has a program that allows persons with disabilities to access certain state lands with ATVs and another that allows them to hunt from their vehicles. This bill was held in committee. ■



# THE COURTS

PHOTO © CARL HEILMAN II/WILD VISIONS INC.



**Snowmobile trail on Forest Preserve lands**

## **Court Trims State Policy On Forest Preserve Cutting**

In July, the Appellate Division of the NYS Supreme Court ruled in *Protect the Adirondacks vs. NYS Dept. of Environmental Conservation, et al.* and declared that plans to build a road-like snowmobile trail through the Adirondack Forest Preserve would cause “an unconstitutional destruction of timber.” The Forever Wild clause of the NYS Constitution prohibits the sale, removal or destruction of timber on the Forest Preserve. Earlier court rulings held that the DEC could cut down a few hundred Forest Preserve trees (for purposes such as the construction of trails, camp sites, ranger cabins, etc.) without being guilty of destroying/removing timber. Unsettled were the questions of how many trees the state could remove lawfully and which trees should be counted. The state’s prior standard had been to count only trees larger than three inches in diameter at breast height (only 6,100 of the 25,000 total in this case). The appellate panel recognized for the first time that small trees can be valuable to the overall

ecosystem, and should be protected. This 4-to-1 ruling means the state must count all trees. The court further ruled that the 25,000 trees the DEC planned to cut down to create miles of new snowmobile trail were too many. The state disagrees with the court’s limitations on cutting and definition of a tree and is appealing the ruling.

## **Phony Test Results Lead to Penalty**

In January, Albany City Judge Holly Trexler struck a blow for clean water when she sentenced the Town of Bolton’s wastewater treatment plant operator Thomas French to three years’ probation. French pled guilty to falsifying records from municipal wastewater release tests and to offering a false instrument for filing. He was arrested by state Environmental Conservation Officers for filing the false records at the Department of Environmental Conservation’s headquarters. French also will be subject to a revocation of his certification/license to operate a wastewater treatment plant.



**The Adirondack Council’s John Sheehan. In federal court the Council is fighting acid rain, see page 12**



**Confluence of the Indian and Hudson Rivers**

PHOTO © CARL HEILMAN II/WILD VISIONS INC.

## **High Court Will Consider Council’s Objections**

In January, the NYS Court of Appeals accepted -- over state’s objections -- the Adirondack Council’s amicus curiae (friend of the court brief) in a lawsuit aimed at preserving the motor-free corridor along a section of the Hudson River that is protected as wild. Protect the Adirondacks! and Adirondack Wild: Friends of the Forest Preserve had sued the NYS Dept. of Environmental Conservation when it proposed the snowmobile trail’s location. That portion of the river is protected under the Wild, Scenic and Recreational Rivers Act. An appellate panel ruled 3-2 against the plaintiffs based on an erroneous interpretation of existing law and a misunderstanding of the facts of the case. The high court was still deliberating at press time. ■

# ATTORNEY GENERAL

PHOTO © CARL HEILMAN II/WILD VISIONS INC.

## 👍 Defending New York from Upwind Coal

In December 2018, Attorney General Barbara Underwood led a coalition of attorneys for New York State, New Jersey and New York City in intervening in a federal smog lawsuit. The suit was brought by the states of Maryland and Delaware, and joined by the Adirondack Council, Environmental Defense Fund, Chesapeake Bay Foundation and a host of public health advocates. Petitioners want the court to reverse the Trump administration's Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) denial of Maryland's and Delaware's petitions for relief from smog-forming pollution caused by 36 coal-fired power plants in upwind states. Millions of New Yorkers routinely breathe unhealthy air due to smog. The air pollutants that cause smog also cause acid rain. Maryland and Delaware were among the first two states whose petitions for relief were unlawfully rejected by the EPA two summers ago. This prompted conservation organizations to rally in support. NYS Attorney General James is continuing the challenge to the EPA's denial of states' petitions.



UNDERWOOD

## Letitia James Succeeds Underwood

Solicitor General Barbara Underwood, who was named Attorney General by the Legislature following the resignation of Eric Schneiderman in May 2018, did not seek election to the position. Instead, she returned to her post as Solicitor General upon the election of Letitia James, who became New York's 67th Attorney General in January of this year. Underwood and James are the first two women to serve as New York's Attorney General.

## 👍 Lifting Veil of EPA's Smokescreen

Attorney General James is suing the EPA over its December 2018 Cross-State Air Pollution Rule "Close-Out." In that action, the EPA said that no further emissions reductions are needed for upwind states to meet their requirements under the "Good Neighbor" provisions of the Clean Air Act. The EPA said that power plants and other sources in upwind states would no longer be causing excessive smog in the Northeast four years from now in 2023. This finding is inconsistent with current air quality monitoring and emissions projections. The complaint was filed by Attorney General James in January and joined by six other states. It urges the court to vacate the EPA's action, calling it arbitrary and capricious.



JAMES

## 👍 Restoring Local Control to RR Line

The state, environmental groups and towns celebrated a victory last year when Warren Buffet's Berkshire Hathaway directed that none of its oil cars ever be stored in the Adirondack Park. Saratoga & North Creek Rail Road, owned by Iowa-Pacific Holdings of Chicago, was forced to remove the junk oil trains it was storing on the rail line that traverses parts of Essex, Warren and Hamilton Counties between the hamlets of North Creek and Newcomb. Parts of the rail line are on state-owned Forest Preserve. Representing the NYS Dept. of Environmental Conservation, Attorney General Underwood sought to codify and make permanent the end of the practice of oil tank cars being stored on the line. In September 2018, Underwood filed a petition asking the U.S. Surface Transportation Board (STB) to rescind any rights the now-bankrupt Iowa-Pacific has to use the line. The objective of the legal petition, if granted, is to keep junk oil trains out. It does not prohibit another authorized rail company from working with the state, towns and the STB to use the line for legal and appropriate purposes consistent with protection of the Adirondacks and efforts to foster vibrant communities. ■



PHOTO © CARL HEILMAN II/WILD VISIONS INC.

**State pressure helped move dozens of scrapped oil tank cars out of the Adirondack Park. Seen here in North Creek, Warren County, they moved south the next day to the Canadian Pacific RR in Saratoga County and out of the Adirondack Park**



# TIP OF THE HAT

PHOTO © CARL HEILMAN II/WILD VISIONS INC.

## PARTNER CONTRIBUTIONS

*Each year the Adirondack Council recognizes individuals and not-for-profit organizations whose work has advanced environmental protection and shown how nature and people can thrive together in the Adirondack Park.*

The **Northeast Wilderness Trust** purchased the 2,400-acre Eagle Mountain tract as a wilderness preserve within the Split Rock Wildway.



### Eagle Mountain Wilderness Preserve

PHOTO: BRENDAN WILTSE

In May, the **Adirondack Land Trust** bought Four Peaks, a 600-acre tract in the towns of Jay and Wilmington that is popular for mountain biking, trail running, hiking, and hunting on and between Bassett Mountain, Wainwright Mountain, Ebenezer Mountain, and Rattlesnake Knob.

Last year, **Brenda Valentine** was chosen by the **Residents of Indian Lake** as the town's Citizen of the Year. Brenda is the President of the Indian Lake Community Development Corporation and was chosen because of her role in shaping the community and moving it toward "a more vibrant future" and a more inclusive nature.



VALENTINE

PHOTO: SARA RUBERG

The **Adirondack Experience** (formerly the Adirondack Museum) created a new paid summer internship and residency program for six college students from African-American and Latino urban neighborhoods.

**Dr. Charles Driscoll** of Syracuse University helped colleagues from around the nation understand the implications of the Trump administration's plan to replace the Clean Power Plan with the much-weaker Affordable Clean Energy Rule. He has been instrumental in the development of "critical loads" standards for limiting acid rain impacts on lakes and streams.

The **Ausable River Association**, **Adirondack Watershed Institute of Paul Smith's College**, **ADK Action**, and the **Lake George Waterkeeper** continue to lead the Park-wide effort to identify and eliminate road salt contamination.



### Deconstruction of the Rome Dam

PHOTO: BRENDAN WILTSE

The **Ausable River Association** led the effort to remove the Rome Dam, on the Ausable River.

In April, **Protect the Adirondacks!** published a peer-reviewed demographic study entitled, *The Adirondack Park and Rural America: Economic and Population Trends 1970-2010* debunking the myth that environmental protection has harmed the Park's economy or quality of life.

**Trout Power's** study of the Raquette River watershed uncovered a resurgence in native trout populations, due to declines in air pollution over the last 30 years. This included the return of the Sagamore Lake Brook Trout which was thought to have been extirpated by acid rain.



### Brook trout

PHOTO: LARRY MASTER, MASTERIMAGES.ORG

The **Adirondack North Country Association** agreed to host the Adirondack Diversity Initiative.

University at Albany professors **Mariya Zheleva**, **Mila Gasco** and **Petko Bogdanov** voluntarily developed a plan to fix the broadband communications system in the tiny, isolated community of Thurman, including state-of-the-art emergency dispatching services.

In February, the **Lake George Waterkeeper** issued a report that identified 10 areas around the lake at the greatest risk from failing septic systems, including North and South Diamond Point, Smokey Bear, South Green Harbour, Stebbins Brook, Sunnyview, Westover Cove, Plum Point, Sand Pebble Cove, and Wiawaka. This research is building support for new septic ordinances around the lake basin. ■



# GROWING SUPPORT FOR PRESERVING ADIRONDACK WATERS & WILDLANDS

PHOTO © CARL HEILMAN II/WILD VISIONS INC.

## BOREAS PONDS DESIGNATED AS WILDERNESS - OPENED TO THE PUBLIC

These new state Wilderness waters and trails are now open to the public to hike, ski, paddle, fish, or just enjoy. They are preserved as “Forever Wild” and designated as Wilderness, meaning no motorized recreation is allowed.



Paddlers spot a pair of loons on Boreas Ponds

## ANALYSIS FINDS OVERUSE HARMS WILDERNESS

Wilderness, waters and wildlife are impacted by overuse. The success of the Adirondack Park, protection of natural resources and sustainable tourism depends on the state and partners taking action to address overuse, inadequate stewardship, and an unfunded need for staff to perform traditional Forest Ranger duties and other jobs.



An increase in trail width, erosion and natural resource damage

NANCIE BATTAGLIA



## NEW YORK STATE RECOGNIZES OVERUSE CHALLENGES



“...current levels of unprecedented high use in popular areas have resulted in challenges to public health and safety as well as impacts to the natural resources and the visitor experience.”

– Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo

## THE SOLUTION

The state agrees that a six-part comprehensive strategy advocated by the Adirondack Council, wilderness advocates and other Park stakeholders is “essential for wildlands management.” These best management practices (BMPs) are:

1. Comprehensive planning
2. Education and outreach
3. Improved parking, information centers, and bathrooms
4. Improved trails and campsites
5. Limits on use, at some times, at some places
6. Needed staff and funding



A DEC trail crew works to improve trail conditions

A DEC Forest Ranger talks with a hiker

NANCIE BATTAGLIA



## TO ADDRESS OVERUSE, EDITORIALS AND STAKEHOLDERS CALL FOR PLANNING, FUNDING & PERMITS

The Dept. of Environmental Conservation and the Town of Keene hosted a meeting with approximately 60 stakeholders. The priority of those attending was that the state collect better data, develop a comprehensive plan, dedicate more funding and personnel to the Adirondacks, test a permit or reservation system to better manage use when and where it exceeds capacity.

## YOU CAN BE PART OF THE SOLUTION!

Add your voice in support of strong protections, comprehensive planning and increased funding for the Adirondacks!

Visit [AdirondackCouncil.org](http://AdirondackCouncil.org), sign the overuse petition, send an email to policymakers, or learn how you can lessen your impact by practicing the seven principles of Leave No Trace. ■

# LOCAL GOVERNMENT

PHOTO © CARL HEILMAN II/WILD VISIONS INC.

## Keene Advances Green Energy

The Town of Keene has completed the process for the NYS Energy Research and Development Authority's certification as a Clean Energy Community. State grants helped the town install a 23.3 kW solar array on the highway garage, which will offset about 65 percent of Keene's municipal electricity use. The funds also helped facilitate the installation of electric vehicle charging stations. The Keene Clean Energy Team supported the town's participation in the program, and has spurred other climate-smart actions.



Electric vehicle charging station in Keene

## Tupper Students Make Town Climate Smart

In June, the Tupper Lake Town Board unanimously passed a resolution to become a Climate Smart Community. The effort to pass the resolution was led by students from the Tupper Lake High School's Green Team, who worked with the Town Board. The state's Climate Smart program helps local governments reduce greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to a changing climate. Benefits include free technical assistance and enhanced access to state grants.

## Redirecting Some Benefits Helps All

This spring, the Town of Keene and the Adirondack Association of Towns and Villages (AATV) joined with the Adirondack Council, Adirondack Mountain Club and an Adirondack Common Ground Alliance core team member to call on state officials to address problems of overuse of wildlands. Surging numbers of Park visitors are flocking to popular hiking and camping destinations. As Keene, Lake Placid, Old Forge, Lake George, and other popular destinations try to cope with crowds, less visited places can reap rewards if peak traffic can be redirected and better managed.

## Towns Lead on Failing Septics

In October 2018, the Town of Queensbury enacted a time-of-sale mandatory septic inspection law requiring waterfront properties to have their systems inspected and fixed as a condition of a sale. Queensbury was the first Adirondack town to pass such a law since Inlet created New York's first septic inspection law in 2009. Bolton Landing followed in May, 2019 and passed a time-of-sale mandatory septic system inspection law for all properties in town, not just waterfront. North Elba (including Lake Placid) adopted a mandatory inspection law too.

## Motorized and Mechanized Recreation in Wilderness

The AATV and its members are promoting proposals to allow mechanical recreation and bicycles, small motors, and snowmobiling in designated state Wilderness areas where motorized and mechanized recreation is prohibited. The AATV is also promoting opening more waters to float plane access.

## The Adirondack Association of Towns and Villages (AATV)

The AATV is a non-profit member organization. Towns and Villages wholly or partly in the Adirondack Park (103) are eligible for membership. Search online for "AATV Legislative Agenda" to view the legislative agenda document.

## ATVs on Wild Lands

The AATV lobbyists urged the Legislature to provide more locations for motorized recreation in the "Forever Wild" Forest Preserve. They also wanted to increase the allowable weight for all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) and allow larger, more powerful Utility Task Vehicles to be registered for use on public roads and trails, despite clear evidence of worsening damage from such vehicles.

## Weaker State Land Protections

The AATV is proposing amendments to the Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan, the guiding document for management of all "Forever Wild" state Forest Preserve. The AATV's changes would decrease protections for clean water, wildlife, fisheries, the ecological integrity, and wild forest character of the state-owned lands and waters. The current Master Plan prioritizes protection of natural resources, and the AATV proposals would change that.

## Less Restrictions on Private Development

Local officials' legislative agenda sought to weaken the Park's private land-use code, impose a statute of limitations on violations of the code, cap the maximum



finer for those violations, and invite sign clutter by eliminating the prohibition against billboards and off-premises business signs outside of hamlets/villages.

## **Weak on Invasive Species**

In the spring of 2019, the AATV told state Legislators that preventing the spread of invasive species is “of paramount importance and ... critical to the economy, ecology and quality of life in the Adirondack Park.” Yet, the AATV balked at supporting a mandatory decontamination program for the park. Their decision came despite the expansion of a state-funded network of boat-washing stations across the Adirondack Park. In fact, some members of AATV and the Adirondack Park Local Government Review Board actively opposed comprehensive decontamination. Inspection and decontamination are free of charge and take only a few minutes. Preventing the spread of invasive species is much simpler and cheaper than dealing with the consequences of an infestation.

## **Cut More Trees**

The AATV supports increased cutting and removal of trees from the Forest Preserve to enhance individual sports such as glade skiing and snowmobiling, and also to restore and maintain scenic vistas.

## **Blaming APA for Cell Company Decisions**

Complaints about poor or non-existent cell phone coverage, a real and common problem in rural areas across the United States, motivated some local elected politicians to call for more and taller towers even if they are not screened. Some local officials lobbied state government to strike down the Adirondack Park Agency's (APA) successful and long-established program for concealing new cell towers within the landscape, requiring them to be “substantially invisible.” Contrary to complaints, cell companies report that the APA's standard has not delayed deployment and locations with limited cell coverage lack sufficient potential subscribers to attract vendors.

Coverage gaps can be solved on remote highways and small communities without towers, through emerging technologies such as small-cell or 5G transceivers attached to existing utility poles and structures.



State Police emergency tower on Cathead Mtn.

## **Promoting Motorized Use of Wilderness**

Officials in Hamilton County continued to press for a Constitutional Amendment to construct a road and install a power line across a section of the Silver Lake Wilderness Area for a new county emergency communications tower. The Council supports the effort to improve emergency communications using on-site power, negating the need for an amendment. The tower could be located on the private summit of Cathead Mountain. The State Police already operate an emergency tower there, with on-site wind, solar energy, and backup generator, with no road or power line. Complicating matters, a private hunting club that owns the summit where the tower would be built wants a road for motorized access to its private property. Club owners purchased the land knowing it had no such access. An amendment would bring new traffic to the Wilderness area's interior, which is in conflict with plans to protect the area as motor-free.

## **More “Flexible” Protections?**

The AATV is proposing “more flexible,” but really weaker, environmental protections to try and stimulate increased economic activity, jobs and population growth in the Park. A detailed analysis of decades of data compiled by Protect the Adirondacks! showed that the environmental protections in the Adirondacks haven't created more challenging economic conditions than in other rural areas across New York, or across the nation. A Clarkson University analysis funded by the Adirondack Council found that property values rose in direct relation to their proximity to protected forests and Wilderness lands.

## **State Helping Hand, Local Cold Shoulder**

In the fall of 2018, officials in Essex County objected when the state tried to help them dispense with a problematic rail road operator. The state began an “adverse abandonment” proceeding against Iowa-Pacific Holdings (IPH), which had misled local officials about its plan to store oil tank cars between North Creek and Newcomb. IPH parked dozens of cars along a scenic stretch of the Upper Hudson River. Rather than accept the state's help, officials said they feared the state was angling to remove the tracks. The state's actions are aimed at re-establishing local control over the line, which was seized from the counties and the state by the federal government during World War II. There is no state proposal to remove the tracks.

## **Oppose State Land Acquisition Policy**

The state's current land acquisition policy is driven by the State Open Space Conservation Plan. The state tries to avoid acquisition of “highly productive” forest land, unless such land is threatened with development. Exceptions are made where wilderness conservation values outweigh the timber production potential. For example, Whitney Park contains productive timberland but is also at the heart of the proposed Bob Marshall Great Wilderness and Wild Lands Complex. So, it is identified as a possible acquisition. The AATV wants this policy amended and local elected leaders are opposing most, if not all, new state land acquisitions. ■

# DEPT. OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION

## **Tackling Carbon Topples Acid Rain Too**

In May, the Department of Environmental Conservation issued tough new rules to curb carbon dioxide emissions from electric power plants. The rules ban the burning of coal to make electricity in New York by the end of 2020. This milestone will reduce sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxides as well. Both are sources of acid rain, smog and fine-particle pollution. The rules preceded by a month the passage of the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act, which calls for carbon neutral power in all sectors of the economy by 2040. New York power plants were once a significant source of acid rain in the Adirondacks. Now, the vast majority of these emissions come from power plants outside the state and fossil fuel-powered vehicles.



Camp site in the High Peaks

## **Admitting Problem is First Step to Recovery**

In 2019, the DEC agreed that it sees an overuse problem in the most popular locations on the Adirondack Forest Preserve. In various presentations and communications to local governments, tourism officials and conservationists, the DEC identified the need for a well-

funded, comprehensive solution. It said the plan should include regional planning, expanded education and outreach, front-country (parking, trailheads) and backcountry (trails) infrastructure, limits on visitors (although only as a last resort) and more resources, including staff.

## **No Comprehensive Plan to Address Overuse**

The DEC still lacks, and has failed to ask for or propose, a comprehensive plan, resources and staff, needed to address the negative impacts of overuse on visitor safety, natural resources and the visitor's wilderness experience. The DEC has recognized the problem and the six essential elements of any solution (planning, education, front country infrastructure, backcountry infrastructure, limits on use at some locations at some times, and resources). The DEC has taken small steps with improved wildlands monitoring plans, primitive tent site management guidance, parking lots, parking restrictions and small sections of new trail. But leadership, more discussion, planning, engineering, construction, maintenance, staff and funding are needed.

## **No Help Wanted**

DEC Commissioner Basil Seggos stated publicly that the state doesn't need more Forest Rangers. But after a decade, the Governor's zero-growth policy for state agency staff is harming the DEC's ability to complete its mission, the success of the Adirondacks, and sustainable tourism. Prior to the current freeze, the DEC suffered deep staff cuts of almost 25 percent under a previous administration. So the department not only needs Rangers, it needs Assistant Rangers, Environmental Conservation Officers, planners, biologists, engineers, land managers, lawyers, and other specialists.

It's time to invest in and support the people needed for the day-to-day care and custody of the Forest Preserve that the state spent millions of dollars to acquire.

## **Seggos Out, Back In**

DEC Commissioner Basil Seggos, who has served since 2015, announced his retirement from the office in the fall of 2018. Seggos said he would serve through the end of the year while Gov. Andrew Cuomo sought a replacement. In early 2019, as the Governor started his third term, Seggos announced he had decided to continue in the commissioner position to provide leadership and support the Governor's agenda.



SEGGOS

## **Has System, Doesn't Use It**

In 1998, the DEC said that limits on the number of visitors at some locations were among the tools available to address overuse problems in the High Peaks Wilderness Area and other popular destinations. The DEC uses a permit system for a popular day use area of the Catskill Forest Preserve known as the Blue Hole, and requires permits for select other areas. But the DEC hasn't moved toward a day-use or camping permit system, or a parking reservation system in high-traffic areas of the High Peaks. In 2019, the Adirondack Council urged the DEC to adopt a parking reservation system for trailhead lots, with a portion set aside for those unaware of the system.



## **Expanded Overuse Outreach**

In 2018 and early 2019, DEC officials expanded education and outreach efforts to help redirect users away from overused locations of the Forest Preserve. Expanded signage helped to redirect visitors to safer parking and less crowded places. The DEC has also implemented necessary parking closures along Route 73 through the Town of Keene to begin addressing the problematic and unsafe parking conditions that resulted from having large numbers of visitors parking on the shoulder of the road near the most popular trailheads. The DEC also worked with the Barkeater Trails Alliance and others during a wet spring to keep hikers and mountain bikers from damaging muddy trails.

## **Less Forever Wild**

The DEC moved to weaken the NYS Constitution's "Forever Wild" clause by pursuing development and expanded tree cutting on the Forest Preserve at multiple locations across the Park. A proposal by the Olympic Regional Development Authority to cut thousands of trees wasn't scaled back until the Council and other advocates objected. At another site, the DEC pressed ahead with plans to build public motorized recreational trails on Forest Preserve that is protected from motors under the Wild, Scenic and Recreational Rivers Act. The DEC proposes four miles of new snowmobile trail in the Blue Ridge Wilderness. The list goes on.

## **Undermining a Strong, Independent APA**

The DEC is using its superior size, funding and political influence to exert pressure on the operations and decisions of the smaller Adirondack Park Agency (APA). The APA's 56 staff members are supposed to act as a check on the DEC's authority to manage the Forest Preserve. Rather than respect the APA's independence, the DEC leaned on the agency to approve Unit Management Plans (UMPs) that undermine state policies requiring natural resource protection to take precedence over intensive use.

## **Has a Cap, Doesn't Wear It**

The DEC's management plan for the High Peaks Wilderness Area and Vanderwhacker Mountain Wild Forest added 12.4 miles of roads, including one that would run within 500 feet of Boreas Ponds. The Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan forbids the expansion of public road mileage on the Forest Preserve. The DEC may add public roads only if it concurrently removes other public roads. New roads would be a significant vector for invasive species for the forest and its lakes and streams. Officials acknowledged during a recent APA meeting that the department must address the mileage cap. No action has been taken.

## **Snowmobile Plan Collides with Trees**

The DEC is moving ahead with plans to build a road-like Class II Community Connector Snowmobile Trail System despite clear warning signs. The wider, flatter, straighter trails will encourage faster travel through the Adirondack Forest Preserve. These wider trails mean more tree-cutting to construct and maintain the trails. The DEC's tree-cutting practices for snowmobile trails have been the subject of lawsuits. The "Forever Wild" clause of the NYS Constitution forbids the sale, removal or destruction of timber on Forest Preserve lands. In June 2019, the DEC's community connector plans were deemed unconstitutional by a panel of judges from the Appellate Division of the NYS Supreme Court. The judges recognized that the DEC needs to cut some trees to create trails, campsites, etc. They determined that the impacts of the project's tree-cutting must be considered as a whole and not on a segment-by-segment basis, as is the DEC's common practice. The judges also clarified that all trees must be counted towards tree removal totals, rather than just trees big enough to sell for timber. Using these standards, the total tree cutting count for the proposed trail being litigated increased from 6,100 trees to 25,000. The Court opined that 25,000 was a substantial tree removal and therefore unconstitutional.

## **Blue Ridge Wilderness Snowmobile Trail**

Rather than fully consider a route through a less sensitive area of public land, avoid encroaching on Wilderness, and/or work with private landowners, the DEC proposed siting four miles of a new snowmobile trail through the Blue Ridge Wilderness Area in Hamilton County. Wilderness areas are supposed to be motor-free. It is technically legal for the DEC to allow a non-conforming use within 500 feet of Wilderness Area boundary, on a very limited basis, if it has no other choice. In this case, however, the DEC has other choices. Its decision to site the trail here only worsens its reputation as an active opponent of Wilderness preservation.



**Overlooking Jamestown Falls and the Raquette-Jordan Boreal Primitive Area**

PHOTO © CARL HEILMAN II/WILD VISIONS INC.

## **Still Talking About More Motorized Access**

In 2019, DEC staff continued to press for additional public motorized access in the area north of the Raquette-Jordan Boreal Primitive Area in St. Lawrence County. The DEC knows this will have a negative impact on the recovery of the native spruce grouse - an endangered species. It will also slow the transition of the Primitive Area to full, motor-free Wilderness status. DEC staff said the public should expect a new proposal for expanded motorized recreation in 2019.

## **New Improved Wild Forest Plans**

In 2019, the DEC completed UMPs that had been incomplete for more than a decade. In June, it released a final plan for the Saranac Lakes Wild Forest, which calls for new management strategies for Forest Preserve

lands and waters, including parts of the Saranac Lakes. The plan includes new boat launches, campsites, hiking, snowmobiling, and mountain bike trails. It also reroutes existing trails, closes roads, closes or relocates dozens of backcountry campsites, and limits motors on Weller Pond. The DEC finalized and the APA approved a UMP for the Hammond Pond Wild Forest. The plan covers about 50 parcels across 45,500 acres of Forest Preserve from Keene to Moriah. The DEC approved UMPs for the Brown Tract Campground in Raquette Lake and the Eagle Point Campground on Schroon Lake.



Utility task vehicles participate in the SNIRT Run

## 👍 Getting Hands Snirty

The DEC stepped up its enforcement efforts at the Lewis County SNIRT (snow+dirt) Run, an all-terrain vehicle (ATV) road and trail rally held each year. It has been expanding eastward across the Adirondack Park's western border from Tug Hill for the past several years. In April 2019, the DEC sent 12 Forest Rangers and six Environmental Conservation Police to work with 15 sheriffs' deputies from two counties and three State Park Police to monitor the record-setting 4,800 riders. The DEC wrote 28 citations for trespass on state lands alone. Officers also arrested ATV riders for driving while intoxicated and other offenses.

## 👎 Inaction Invites Motors into Wilderness

The DEC is refusing to exercise its right under state law to close a former town road (now the Jackrabbit Ski Trail) to motorized recreation through the Sentinel Range Wilderness Area in Essex County. This decision leaves the corridor open to potential motorized traffic. Wilderness areas are supposed to be motor-free. The DEC lost

a lawsuit in 2018 in which it offered several justifications for its decision to close the road. None were found to have extinguished the town's right to the road; however, the appellate panel took an unusual step of offering the DEC a solution. They wrote that Highway Law 212 "vests DEC with the authority to order the abandonment or discontinuance of a road passing over or through lands within the Forest Preserve..."

## 👍 Clean Water Grants Help Communities

In 2018, the DEC awarded more than \$5 million in clean water infrastructure grants to Adirondack communities through its Water Quality Improvement Program. The money helped local taxpayers afford wastewater treatment improvements, nonagricultural stormwater runoff prevention, watershed protection for source waters, road salt storage, aquatic connectivity restoration, and separation of storm sewers from sewage treatment systems. Also, nine Adirondack communities received grants for engineering assistance for construction and repair of wastewater treatment systems. These grants supplement grants and loans from the State's Environmental Facilities Corporation.



Wastewater treatment facility aeration ponds along the AuSable River

PHOTO © CARL HEILMAN II/WILD VISIONS INC.

## 👎 Shell Game with Ranger Pay

In an effort to give Forest Rangers a much-needed pay increase, the DEC created an internal conflict that resulted in no raise after all. Commissioner Seggos proposed consolidating the title of Forest Ranger with the slightly better-paid Environmental Conservation Officer (ECOs). He promised

Rangers he wouldn't consolidate divisions or duties. ECOs objected to what felt like a downgrading, and Rangers balked at the change in title and said they feared a loss in identity. The DEC's proposal would have limited the traditional Forest Ranger's priority of protection of the Forest Preserve.

## 👎 Backroom Deal Reneges Conservation Promise

The DEC continues to promote its October 2018 proposal to amend the 19,000-acre Long Pond Conservation Easement (est. 1999) that would undo provisions that were written into the original document requiring the removal of development to protect and restore conservation values. By signing a contract to allow 15 private cabins "to stay in perpetuity" after they were previously scheduled for removal, the DEC calls into question the validity of other conservation and recreation commitments throughout the Adirondacks. While the DEC promised that there would be a net conservation gain, it merely offered to buy lands of lesser conservation value outside the Park as compensation. These lands would not be protected from development and cutting as "Forever Wild." The DEC proposal was withdrawn after the Council objected. The DEC says to expect an amended plan that still fails to remove the development. Allowing these cabins to remain was a political solution orchestrated by state Sens. Patty Ritchie, R-Watertown, and Betty Little, R-Queensbury, that dismantles a long-awaited outcome agreed to decades ago between the landowners and public.

## 👍 Blueprint for Sustainable Private Forests

In early 2019, the DEC held a series of statewide public meetings to highlight the need for improvements and better incentives for sustainable private forest management. DEC staff collected suggestions on how to improve carbon sequestration, promote long-term harvest management, and provide options for maximum wildlife protection and no-harvest zones. The state's antiquated system of incentives via property tax abatements for only timberlands needs an overhaul by the Legislature. The DEC helped show how to do it properly. ■



# ADIRONDACK PARK AGENCY

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## Moving Toward Better Planning

The Adirondack Park Agency (APA) showed it can work with the Dept. of Environmental Conservation (DEC) to create complex, integrated, landscape-scale plans to manage adjoining Forest Preserve units and other lands. In the past, each of the Forest Preserve's 100-plus units was largely viewed in a vacuum. The APA approved "complex" plans for the consolidated High Peaks and Dix Mountain Wilderness Area, as well as the Hammond Pond and Vanderwhacker Mountain wild forests, and nearby private lands that allow public access. This holistic approach allows the DEC to address natural resource protection concerns, such as climate change and overuse, across the entire landscape.



Hiker enjoys the view from Giant Mountain



Sign reminds hikers to stay on marked trails and help protect sensitive alpine plants



## Protocol is First Step

The APA, along with the DEC, is developing a wildlands monitoring protocol to guide the gathering of information on the impacts of recreation and public access on the natural resources of the Park. Both agencies have obligations under state law to assess the carrying capacity of any Forest Preserve unit on which they are authorizing public access and recreation. The intensity of the activities allowed by the state is supposed to be based on the land's ability to withstand that use. The agencies are then supposed to prevent substantial changes to the unit from recreational use. Baseline studies are needed for most of the 100-plus Forest Preserve units.



## 40 Years a Long Time

In June, APA staff lobbied against the Conservation Design bill that would have significantly improved the agency's rules for development on large, unbroken forests. The bill was sponsored by the Environmental Conservation Committee chairs in both houses of the Legislature and was supported by the Adirondack Association of Towns and Villages, the Adirondack Park

Local Government Review Board and the Adirondack Common Ground Alliance. It would protect forests, water quality and wildlife in the Park's most remote locations by mandating more compact development footprints and greater conservation of open space. The APA's rules for development haven't been significantly updated since 1979.



Development in the southern Adirondacks

PHOTO © CARL HEILMAN II/WILD VISIONS INC.



## Potential Improvement for Large Subdivisions

The agency adopted modest changes to its large-scale subdivision permit application process in 2018. The move followed sharp criticism of the APA's handling of the prior two major subdivisions it had approved in remote locations. New standards ask applicants to submit natural resource and physical data early in the conceptual review process, before the application deadline clock starts ticking. The APA also opened a 30-day public comment period on the submitted data and sketches to allow for input prior to the submission of a complete application. A 1,200-acre subdivision around Woodward Lake just west of Northville is the first test of the new process. To date, the subdivision design has not improved.

## Leadership Sorely Lacking

Framers of the Adirondack Park Agency Act expected the agency to provide leadership on conservation and planning issues vital to the Park's survival. Today, those issues include climate change, untreated wastewater, overuse, road salt, and invasive species. Over a period of 10 months the Chair (Sherman Craig) and then the Acting Chair (Karen Feldman) resigned. Since May, the Board hasn't had a leader appointed by the Governor.



**On Quebec Brook, Madawaska Flow**

PHOTO © CARL HEILMAN II/WILD VISIONS INC.

## Limiting Public Comment Opportunities

In an attempt to fast-track projects, the APA and the DEC are misusing the public trust by scheduling concurrent public comment periods for Unit Management Plans (UMPs) for specific areas of the Forest Preserve. The DEC is supposed to propose plans and allow for comment. The DEC can only issue a proposed final plan after considering comments and making changes as warranted. Then the APA collects comments on whether that final plan complies with the Adirondack State Land Master Plan. First proposed for non-controversial administrative actions, the APA is now using concurrent comment periods for more complex and controversial topics, limiting public participation and transparency.

## Rubber Stamp Less Wilderness

When approving the DEC's UMPs for the High Peaks Wilderness and Vanderwhacker Mountain Wild Forest as compliant with the Adirondack State Land Master Plan, the APA acknowledged, but chose not to address, glaring shortcomings. For example, the APA acknowledged that the Master Plan does not allow any material increase in the mileage of roads open for public motorized recreation. Yet, the plan they accepted opened more than 10 miles of new roads. Also, while the APA is required to prioritize protection of natural resources over accommodating recreational uses, it didn't require the DEC to propose a strategy for dealing with well-documented impacts of overuse.

## Aborted Renewable Energy Policy

In October 2018, the APA announced a much needed new draft policy to guide its review of renewable energy production and energy supply projects in the Park. The policy was also intended to expand public awareness about climate change and harmful fossil fuel consumption. This promising initiative was stalled after the agency chose not to pursue it, despite the clean energy goals the state has set and the efforts of other state agencies. The APA has not developed a Park-wide renewable energy, energy conservation and/or resilience plan.



**Solar panels at Cloudsplitter Outfitters in Newcomb**

## Renewable Energy Permit Guidance

In June, the APA issued guidance for permit applicants on wind and solar power development. The instructions explain that projects need a permit if they are in wetlands, are taller than 40 feet or are commercial, and lists the setbacks from water for projects adjacent to wetlands, lakes and wild rivers. This effort will help the agency handle the rise in applications for commercial solar facilities that are expected as a result of New York's renewable energy mandate.



**Gore Mountain Ski Center**

PHOTO © CARL HEILMAN II/WILD VISIONS INC.

## Cross Country Ski Trails, Not Glades

In late 2018, the APA and DEC released a draft management guidance for the design, construction and maintenance of backcountry ski trails on Forest Preserve, as defined in the Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan. The agencies resisted calls for constitutionally questionable alpine-style downhill ski glades on Forest Preserve lands that would involve the cutting of some trees to open and expand wide ski runs between other trees. Currently, creating or maintaining downhill ski glades is allowed on the Forest Preserve only where specifically authorized by a Constitutional Amendment, such as at Whiteface Mountain, Gore Mountain and Bellayre Mountain ski centers. ■



# FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

PHOTO © CARL HEILMAN II/WILD VISIONS INC.

## Trump Deals ACER

In 2018, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) said that it planned to replace the Obama-era climate program known as the Clean Power Plan with the proposed Affordable Clean Energy Rule (ACER). The proposal would undo mandatory carbon reductions at electric power plants, the nation's largest source of greenhouse gases. Gone would be an expected 32-percent reduction in carbon by 2030, and the expected 12-percent cut in sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxides that would occur as a side-benefit of the modernizations required to meet the carbon standards. Under the Trump administration's rule, carbon reductions would be voluntary. Power plant owners could rebuild old plants without reducing their emissions to modern standards.

## Please Ignore the Coughing, Your Honor

In October 2018, the EPA denied petitions filed by Maryland and Delaware seeking relief from smog. The downwind states petitioned after measurements showed pollution levels above federal standards from sources outside their borders. They exercised their rights under the Clean Air Act, which prohibits power plants in one state from causing unhealthy levels of smog in others. The EPA lacks the discretion to ignore or deny such petitions. When the EPA received them, it should have ordered the 36 dirtiest coal-fired power plants in the nation to turn on their already-installed pollution controls. It did not. The Adirondack Council, Environmental Defense Fund (EDF) and other organizations filed federal lawsuits in support of Maryland and Delaware, asking a District of Columbia court to reverse the EPA's denial. In July 2019, the Council and EDF filed comments

with the EPA Administrator objecting to his proposal to deny New York's petition, which was filed a few months after Maryland's and Delaware's. Smog causes serious health problems and thousands of pre-mature deaths each year in the Northeast.



(L-R) Senator Chuck Schumer (D-NY) and Communications Director John Sheehan

## Maximum Achievable Deregulation

In June, the EPA proposed a rule allowing major sources of toxic and cancer-causing pollution, such as refineries and chemical plants, to escape regulation under current standards. They create such high levels of pollution, that these plants are required to use Maximum Achievable Control Technology (MACT), meaning every available type of pollution control, not just the most affordable/efficient. Under the proposed rule, any major plant that temporarily reduces its output of up to 187 dangerous pollutants below the "major plant" threshold can obtain a lifetime exemption from MACT standards.

## Keeping You Alive Too Expensive for Polluters

In December 2018, the EPA issued a proposed revised Supplemental Cost Finding for the Mercury and Air Toxics Standards, as well as the Clean Air Act "risk and technology review" Requirement. The EPA used spurious data to create a cost/benefit analysis that made the program seem too expensive. In addition, it proposed to nullify the principle that the EPA should count "side-benefits" when assessing the desirability of pollution regulations. When coal-fired power plants switch to cleaner fuels, mercury emissions are reduced, and so are sulfur and nitrogen, soot, and other pollution. The environment and human health will be compromised if these side-benefits aren't considered. The EPA's website says "the Agency proposes to determine that it is not 'appropriate and necessary' to regulate hazardous air pollution from power plants ..."

## Land & Water Fund Alive Again

In March 2019, Congress revived the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), which had been allowed to expire in September 2018. Congress passed and President Trump signed a bill reauthorizing the fund and making its revenue permanent. The LWCF is supposed to receive \$900 million per year from federal oil and gas leases on the Outer Continental Shelf. The money is intended to help compensate for the environmental damage done by fuel exploration. It can be used to protect national parks, areas around rivers and lakes, and national forests and wildlife refuges from development. It can also provide matching grants for state and local parks, open space protection and public recreation projects. It has been used

several times inside the Adirondack Park. The LWCF has funded conservation projects in all 62 New York counties, but no funding has been awarded to New York since 2011.

## **Boost for EPA's Budget**

In April, the New York Congressional delegation, led by Elise Stefanik, R-Salem, and Paul Tonko, D-Amsterdam, sent a letter to the chairs of a key House Interior subcommittee asking them to protect acid rain research funding in the EPA's budget. The Trump administration's proposed budget contained a 31-percent cut to the EPA's funding. The House's budget bill for the Interior, which it passed in June, contained a \$6 million increase for the EPA. Also signing the letter were Reps.



**STEFANIK**



**TONKO**

John Katko, R-Syracuse, Sean Patrick Maloney, D-Newburg, Carolyn Maloney, D-Manhattan, Antonio Delgado, D-Kingston, and Joseph Morelle, D-Rochester.

## **It's Better to Know**

The U.S. Global Change Research Program released its fourth annual report in November 2018. It "focuses on the human welfare, societal, and environmental elements of climate change and variability." It assesses 10 regions and 18 national topics, with attention paid to risks and impacts under different mitigation pathways. It is intended to inform decision-makers, utility and natural resource managers, public health officials, emergency planners, and other stakeholders about the effects of climate change. The report also analyzes impacts upon the natural environment, agriculture, energy production and use, transportation, health and welfare, social systems, and biological diversity. It projects major trends for the subsequent 25 to 100 years. There have been reports of the Trump administration holding back agency information on climate change.

## **Farm Bill has Climate-Friendly Funds**

In December 2018, Congress passed an improved Farm Bill that provides funding for farm conservation programs that enhance the sustainability of environmentally wise, climate-friendly farms such as those in the Adirondack Park's Champlain Valley. It included \$500 million in funding for the Local Agriculture Market Program. The bill reauthorized \$50 million for the Rural Energy for America program that assists farmers, agriculture producers and rural small businesses in purchasing renewable energy systems and making energy-efficiency improvements.

## **No Money for that Nonsense**

In June, the House Interior budget bill passed and included language forbidding the EPA from using federal funds to undo important clean air safeguards. The resolution forbids the EPA from following through on a plan announced in December 2018 to reverse New Source Review provisions affecting greenhouse gases. The bill also prohibits the EPA from reconsidering whether Obama-era standards curbing hazardous air pollutants from coal-fired power plants are really "appropriate and necessary." Such a finding is the legal foundation required for all air pollution regulations; however, the legislation did not advance in the US Senate.

## **Going Extinct? So What?**

In August, the Trump administration moved to overhaul the Endangered Species Act in ways that would push more rare and sensitive animals and plants to extinction. The changes would end blanket protections for animals newly deemed threatened. Trump's EPA would also allow federal authorities -- for the first time -- to take into account the economic cost of protecting a particular species. Current law places the priority on preventing extinctions, not saving money for industry. As threats from climate change and human activities mount, the federal government should be moving to broaden the number of species protected.



**Produce from Essex Farm in the Champlain Valley**

PHOTO: BEN STECHSHULTE

## **Well Known, Not Well Loved**

President Donald Trump's nomination of long-time GOP Senate staffer Andrew Wheeler as the EPA Administrator was the least qualified choice of all 15 people who have served in the post. Wheeler's nomination garnered 47 "no" votes out of 100 senators.

## **Mr. Secretary, Someone is Here to See You**

In April, newly appointed Secretary of the Interior David Bernhardt became the latest member of the Trump Cabinet to come under investigation by his own agency's inspector general. In April, the Interior's inspector general opened an investigation into allegations of conflict of interest and other violations during Bernhardt's tenure as the agency's deputy secretary. Similar investigations led to the departures of Bernhardt's predecessor, Ryan Zinke, and the EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt. ■



**The endangered round white fish can be found in Adirondack lakes**

PHOTO: CORNELL UNIVERSITY



# OTHER AGENCIES



## New Facilities to Safeguard Water

In 2018, the Environmental Facilities Corporation's (EFC) Water Infrastructure Improvement Act program awarded over \$6 million in clean water infrastructure grants and an additional \$17 million in zero interest financing to Adirondack communities. This has helped keep untreated sewage out of Adirondack waters such as the Ausable River, Lake Champlain and their tributaries. The EFC has also dedicated technical assistance staff in the Adirondacks to help communities with their projects and co-hosted a May 2019 workshop in the Park, partnering with the Adirondack Council and Essex County.



## Lifeline Too Heavy for Boat

The Environmental Facilities Corp (EFC) failed to adjust its internal policy that limits its grants to communities for wastewater treatment facilities to only 25 percent of the project cost. The Governor promised that the grant program would close the gap between what communities needed and what they could afford, with a cap of \$5 million per community. Many Adirondack communities cannot afford to repay loans for 75 percent of a multi-million-dollar treatment facility.



## Planning Framework in Place

In May, after 10 years in the making, the departments of Transportation and Environmental Conservation published the **Master Travel Corridor Unit Management Plan for State Highways in the Adirondack Park**. This outlines goals, strategies, objectives, policies, and guidelines for the management of the 28 travel corridors inside the Park. A travel corridor is one of nine basic state land classifications in the Adirondack Park State Land Master

Plan and includes the roadbed and right-of-way for state and interstate highways in the Park; the Remsen to Lake Placid railroad right-of-way; and those state lands immediately adjacent to them. Each one will need its own Unit Management Plan, which should include transportation activities, assessments of carrying capacity, and management objectives.



## Steering Towards Safe Roads, Clean Water

The NYS Department of Transportation (DOT) said in December 2018 that it will begin using less salt on Route 86 between Lake Placid and Wilmington. As part of the DOT's salt pilot test program, the speed limit on some parts of the 16-mile section of highway will be reduced from 55 to 45 miles per hour for the winter months. The test is designed to protect Mirror Lake and the Ausable River. The DOT is implementing a similar salt-reduction test along Route 9N from the Village of Lake George to the Town of Bolton.



## No Time for Baby Steps

The DOT keeps taking small, incremental steps to address the worsening problem of road salt contamination in Adirondack lakes, rivers and underground supplies. Meanwhile, reports keep pouring in about lakes and streams all over the Park showing elevated sodium and chloride levels,

including private wells. The DOT must design and implement a strategy to transform its approach to road deicing in sensitive locations around the state, with emphasis on the Adirondacks. The Park's thin soils, abundant water and steep slopes make for rapid discharge from road to water.



## Extra-Constitutional Amusements

In 2018, the Olympic Regional Development Authority (ORDA) operated Whiteface Mountain Ski Center outside the limits of its legal authority, by offering the public rides on trails in the Forest Preserve in a utility task vehicle (UTV). Off-road vehicles and commercial activities are generally not allowed on Forest Preserve trails. Whiteface Ski Center operates on the Forest Preserve via a constitutional amendment that spells out allowable winter uses. The Adirondack Council and Adirondack Mountain Club objected and the UTV rides stopped.



## That's a Lot of Trees

At Mount Van Hoevenberg Recreation Area in 2019, ORDA officials proposed cutting down more than 5,000 Forest Preserve trees to construct new spectator and competition amenities for the 2023 World University Games. ORDA had at first concluded that no tree-cutting on the Forest Preserve was needed to upgrade facilities for the Games. The recreation area is the site of bobsled, biathlon and nordic ski racing facilities. ORDA scaled back its estimates of cutting and moved some of the construction to non-Forest Preserve lands after the Adirondack Council and others objected. Unlike at Whiteface and Gore Mountain ski centers, Mt. Van Hoevenberg has no constitutional amendment to authorize activities that would otherwise be prohibited on the Forest Preserve. ■

# AWARDS

## Conservationist of the Year

The Adirondack Council presented its Conservationist of the Year Award to Christopher J. “Kim” Elliman during the organization’s Forever Wild Day celebration on July 13 at Cornell’s Willsboro Research Farm on Lake Champlain.

Elliman’s work as President and CEO of the Open Space Institute (OSI) and a lifetime commitment to conservation was celebrated by 250 friends of the Adirondacks, Adirondack Council members, staff and board members. That included Lt. Governor Kathy Hochul and Town of Willsboro Supervisor Shaun Gilliland, who is also Chairman of the Essex County Board of Supervisors.

As President and CEO of the Open Space Institute since 1992, Kim Elliman has acquired and protected thousands of acres of Adirondack forests, preserving clean water and wildlife, while also fostering more vibrant communities. Kim and his family have helped preserve thousands of additional acres. His conservation work has also made an impact far beyond the Adirondacks, which he calls home.

Elliman’s OSI team was an early partner in the state’s plan to establish the new Adirondack Gateway at the former Frontier Town (Northway Exit 29) in North Hudson. OSI projects have expanded motor-free wilderness and diminished overcrowding on the most popular routes.

OSI has conserved more than 2.3 million acres in the eastern U.S. and has created more than 50 new parks and preserves. OSI acquires, finances, and promotes the conservation of lands for human use and resilient natural systems.



**(L-R) Executive Director Willie Janeway, Kim Elliman, Joe Martens and Board Chair Bob Kafin**

Elliman has a long history in the Adirondacks, having come to the High Peaks every year of his life. He served on the Board of the Adirondack Council from 1982-1994, when he worked with fellow board members and other partners to create the Adirondack Land Trust. He served as Chair of the Council from 1987-1992, during which time the Conservationist of the Year award was initiated.

He expanded OSI’s scope into the Adirondacks, where it has purchased and preserved a number of key tracts including lands important to local culture and tourism in the iron-mining ghost town of Tahawus, in Essex County, and the important canoe path known as Marion Carry near Blue Mountain Lake, in Hamilton County.

Elliman said he counts himself “lucky to have served on the Council Board with extraordinary conservation leaders such as Frances Beinecke, Harold Jerry, Peter Berle, Jim Marshall, John Ernst and Barbara Glaser, and at OSI with John Adams, Joe Martens, John Cahill, and others.”

## Special Recognition

The Adirondack Council also celebrated the work of renowned Adirondack artist and author Sheri Amsel of Westport.

Sheri’s books and paintings are well known around the Adirondacks and beyond. A portion of her career has been dedicated to helping tell the story of the Adirondack Park to a worldwide audience through her maps, illustrations and drawings.

Sheri Amsel has written and illustrated more than 30 non-fiction children’s books and developed interpretive signs for museums, schools and nature centers. Sheri’s work went online in 2005 with [www.Exploringnature.org](http://www.Exploringnature.org), a science education website used by schools and homeschool families around the world. Sheri touches thousands of lives each year with her compelling images and accessible information, helping inspire a growing number of people - both children and adults - to love nature, appreciate science, and support conservation in the Adirondacks and around the world. ■



**(L-R) Deputy Director Diane Fish and Board Chair Bob Kafin present Sheri Amsel with a Special Recognition Award**





# 2020 PRIORITIES

Federal and state elected and appointed government leaders will be making critical decisions in the year ahead that will affect the legacy of the Adirondacks for all time. Priorities for 2020 include:

## **Defend the East's Greatest Wilderness**

Finish, fund and implement a comprehensive plan to address overuse including: more traditional Forest Rangers and other staff; address all-terrain vehicle misuse; and defend the NYS Constitution's "Forever Wild" clause.

## **Combat Climate Change and Acid Rain**

Fund and execute the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act; fight acid rain; promote clean energy and energy conservation; and dedicate new funding to acid rain and climate research.

## **Protect Clean Water and Reduce Road Salt Pollution**

Continue clean water grants to communities at \$1 billion per year or more; provide larger grants, not loans, to rural towns; and take comprehensive actions to address road salt pollution of drinking water.

## **Strengthen the Adirondack Park Agency**

The Governor should appoint, and the Senate should confirm, a diverse slate of new and returning board members with expertise in environmental science, law, planning, park tourism, and development; and improve agency protections of large acreage in remote locations.

## **Update Invasive Species Protections**

Strengthen the law against transport of invasive species from one lake or river to another; and improve it with mandatory boat/trailer decontamination in the Adirondacks at a network of free inspection stations.

## **Support Working Forests and Farms**

Secure new incentives, regulations and policies to promote ecologically sustainable, climate-friendly working forests and farms.

## **Improve Community Communications**

Require telecom companies to provide universal broadband access in the Park; improve cell coverage via incentives for "substantially invisible" infrastructure in communities and on major highways.

## **Expand Conservation Funding**

Expand funding for protection of pure water, wildlife and wildlands; fund increases in state staffing to address climate change, overuse, invasive species and other threats. ■

The Adirondack Council is committed to our mission, our values and these priorities. We will use the best available science and respect diverse views in order to achieve these results. We will employ our knowledge of the political process to be the leading advocate for the Adirondacks. We work with partners, promote diversity, and find common ground when possible. We carry on the legacy of early conservation visionaries and ensure the Park is known and protected as a national treasure.



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### Thank You Adirondack Park Advocates!

This year, thousands of Adirondack Council advocates took action to preserve clean water and clean air, protect wildlife, address overuse, fight climate change and invasive species, and more. Your personal letters, phone calls and 18,000+ emails to policymakers helped secure positive results for the Park. Your continued involvement is essential to protecting the Adirondack legacy for generations to come. Thank you!

## Gear Up for Your Adventure

Visit our online shop at  
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**NEW!** - 2020 Forever Wild  
Calendar - \$14

Car Decal - \$5

